REMARKS

This application has been reviewed in light of the Office Action dated June 16, 2005. Claims 1, 3-12, 14-35, 38, 40, and 43 remain pending in this application. Claims 1, 3-5, 7-10, 12, 14-16, 18-21, 23, 24, 27, 30, 32, 38, and 40 have been amended to define still more clearly what Applicants regard as their invention. Claims 2 and 13 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer of subject matter. Claims 1, 7, 12, 18, 23, 24, 27, 32, 38, and 40 are independent.

The objections to Claims 1 and 12 as set forth at paragraph 2 of the Office Action have been corrected in the fashion kindly suggested by the Examiner. Withdrawal of the objection to Claims 1 and 12 is respectfully requested.

Claims 7-11, 18-22, 24, and 26 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent 6,687,742 (Iwazaki), and Claims 27, 28, 32, 34, 35, 38, 40, and 43, as being anticipated by U.S. Patent 6,396,848 (Ohta). Claims 1-6, 12-17, 23, and 25 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being obvious from Iwazaki in view of U.S. Patent 6,327,046 (Miyamoto et al.); Claims 29-31, as being obvious from Ohta in view of U.S. Patent 6,650,440 (Wing); and Claim 33, as being obvious from Ohta in view of U.S. Patent 6,301,016 (Matsueda).

Claim 1 is directed to an image communicating apparatus which is connected to a network capable of performing E-mail communication and has an E-mail communicating function. The apparatus includes an E-mail transmitting unit, a requesting unit, a communication managing unit, and a control unit.

The E-mail transmitting unit sends E-mail data accompanied by an image file. The requesting unit selectively adds information for requesting a message disposition

notification to the E-mail data to be sent to a receiver by the E-mail transmitting unit. The communication managing unit manages transmission information of each of sent E-mail data. The control unit is adapted to update, in a manner capable of identifying whether or not a message disposition notification responsive to the sent E-mail to which the message disposition notification requesting information is added is received, the transmission information which is managed by the communication managing unit. This is done on the basis of an identification result as to whether or not the requesting unit requests the message disposition notification responsive to the sent E-mail and a reception result of the message disposition notification responsive to the sent E-mail.

By virtue of the features of Claim 1, it is possible(1) selectively to request to the receiver information as to how the transmitted E-mail has been processed (e.g., the transmitted E-mail has been opened, the image attached to the transmitted E-mail has been printed, or the like), by using the message disposition notification (MDN), and (2) to update the transmission information of the relevant transmitted E-mail on the basis of the MDN reception result.[1/] In other words, although it is conventionally impossible to manage information regarding how the transmitted E-mail has been processed by the receiver, it is possible by virtue of the features of Claim 1 to manage the transmission information by updating it.

Moreover, it is also possible, by virtue of the features of Claim 1, selectively to perform a so-called MDN request, whereby, for example, a user can select a transmitted E-mail of which he or she wishes to know the processed result on the reception side. Thus,

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1/It is of course to be understood that the references to various portions of the present application are by way of illustration and example only, and that the claims are not limited by the details of the particular embodiments referred to.

it is possible, by virtue of the features of Claim 1, to reduce unnecessary communication traffic caused by unnecessary MDNs.

Miyamoto et al., as understood by Applicants, relates to an electronic mail processing apparatus having a function of transmitting and receiving electronic mails. In Miyamoto et al., if a reply is necessary with respect to the E-mail to be transmitted, the user on the transmission side checks the CHECKBOX 19 shown in Fig. 5 and thereafter sets a reply term by using the calendar shown in Fig. 6, whereby the registration to the ToDo list is performed as shown in Fig. 7. Subsequently, if the user receives the reply E-mail from the reception side in response to the transmitted E-mail, it automatically adds the check to the ToDo list.

Applicants note that, in Fig. 5 of Miyamoto et al., although it is possible to selectively check the CHECKBOX 19, the result of such checking is merely to register the set information to the ToDo list on the transmission side but is not to add an MDN request information to the transmitted E-mail. Accordingly, Miyamoto et al. is quite different from the concept of Claim 1 of selectively requesting an MDN to an E-mail so that the user on the transmission side can know the processed result on the reception side. That is, nothing in Miyamoto et al. would teach or suggest selectively adding information for requesting a message disposition notification to E-mail data to be sent to a receiver by an E-mail transmitting unit, as recited in Claim 1.

Iwazaki, as understood by Applicants, relates to a communication control method for an electronic mail system in which a plurality of electronic mail devices transmit and receive images in the form of electronic mail over a computer network such as the Internet.

First, as already explained in the Amendment filed on April 18, 2005, Iwazaki cannot selectively request an MDN. Second, Iwazaki (see column 7, lines 61-64) discusses that, when a reply message by the MDN is received, the processed results described in the received reply message is recorded in the transmission history information. However, at most this merely implies that the relevant result is recorded in the transmission history information; Iwazaki does not teach or suggest that the transmission information to the transmitted E-mail to which the MDN request was performed is updated.

Accordingly, nothing in Iwazaki and Miyamoto et al., whether considered either separately or in any permissible combination (if any) would teach or suggest "a control unit, adapted to update, in a manner capable of identifying whether or not a message disposition notification responsive to the sent E-mail to which the message disposition notification requesting information is added is received, the transmission information which is managed by said communication managing unit on the basis of an identification result as to whether or not said requesting unit requests the message disposition notification responsive to the sent E-mail and a reception result of the message disposition notification responsive to the sent E-mail", as recited in Claim 1.

Accordingly, Claim 1 is believed to be patentable over Iwazaki and Miyamoto et al., whether considered either separately or in any permissible combination (if any).

Independent Claims 12 and 23 each recite features which are sufficiently similar to those discussed above with respect to Claim 1 that the reasons discussed above with regard to the latter claim, apply with equal force to Claims 12 and 23.

Claim 7 is directed to an image communicating apparatus which is connected to a network capable of performing E-mail communication and has an E-mail communicating function. An E-mail receiving unit is adapted to receive E-mail data accompanied by an image file, and a detecting unit is adapted to detect control information which requests reply E-mail from the E-mail data received by said E-mail receiving unit. A notifying unit is adapted to notify information which represents that the control information is detected by the detecting unit to a user of the image communicating apparatus.

By virtue of the features of Claim 7, if it is detected that the control information which requests the reply E-mail exists in the received E-mail, the reception-side user is notified of the detected control information; thus, it is possible to allow the reception-side user to perform a subsequent action (for example, instructing to transmit a reply message to the MDN request) instantaneously.

In contrast, the MDN message of Iwazaki, which the Examiner apparently considers to correspond to the notifying unit of Claim 7, is a return E-mail message to the transmission side. That is, this message is a notification to the transmission side but is not the notification to the user of the image communicating apparatus (reception side) as recited in Claim 7.

Nothing in Iwazaki would teach or suggest an image communicating apparatus which (1) detects control information which requests reply E-mail from E-mail data received by an E-mail receiving unit, and (2) notifies information which represents that the control information is detected, to a user of the image communicating apparatus, as recited in Claim 7.

Accordingly, Claim 7 is believed to be patentable over Iwazaki.

Independent Claims 18 and 24 each recite features which are sufficiently similar to those discussed above with respect to Claim 7 that the reasons discussed above with regard to the latter claim, apply with equal force to Claims 18 and 24.

Claim 27 is directed to an image communicating apparatus for sending and receiving image information through a communication network. The apparatus includes an E-mail unit, a memory unit, a communication management information forming unit, an updating unit, and a communication management report output unit.

The E-mail unit is adapted to send and receive E-mail via an E-mail server connected to the communication network, and the memory unit stores communication management information of the E-mail. The communication management information forming unit is adapted to, each time the E-mail is sent by the E-mail unit, form communication management information of the sent E-mail and store the communication management information into the memory unit. The updating unit is adapted to, when a delivery status notification for the sent E-mail from the E-mail server is received by the E-mail unit, update contents of the communication management information of the E-mail which received the delivery status notification in accordance with the received delivery status notification. The communication management report output unit is adapted to output a communication management report indicative of the communication management information stored in the memory unit.

By virtue of the features of Claim 27, communication management information is updated in the case where an E-mail from the image communicating apparatus is transmitted to a destination through the E-mail server. Typically, in the case

of transmitting the E-mail, the partner with which the transmission-side image communicating apparatus directly communicates is the E-mail server (for example, a POP server, an SMTP server, etc.). Conventionally, information to be recorded in communication management information of a transmission-side image communicating apparatus is only the information concerning the transmission between the image communication apparatus and the E-mail server, and, only by the relevant information, the user who transmitted the E-mail cannot know whether or not the E-mail was correctly delivered from the E-mail server. On the contrary, according to the image communicating apparatus of Claim 27, communication management information of the transmission-side image communicating apparatus is updated based on a DSN (delivery status notification) sent from the E-mail server. Accordingly, by virtue of the features of Claim 27, it is possible to know the information concerning whether or not the E-mail server correctly delivered the E-mail. Such information cannot be known by conventional communication management information.

Ohta, as understood by Applicants, relates to an apparatus and method of allowing a user to browse the history of relay transmission on a data terminal. Ohta discusses that, in a case where a network facsimile apparatus transmits an E-mail, the relevant apparatus first transmits the E-mail to the server 3 (see Fig. 1); that is, the E-mail is transmitted to the desired destination through the server 3. Page 10 of the Office Action cites Fig. 7 and column 14, lines 20-22 of Ohta, as allegedly corresponding to the updating unit of Claim 27. However, since Ohta does not disclose that the server 3 returns a DSN with respect to the relevant transmitted E-mail to the network facsimile apparatus, it is impossible to update the result of the DSN to the transmission result shown in Fig. 7.

Although Fig. 7 of Ohta apparently shows that the transmission result (OK or NG) is marked, this is merely an example of the transmission result in a so-called G3 facsimile; that is, this does not teach or suggest the transmission result by an E-mail as in Claim 27.

Moreover, even if Fig. 7 of Ohta were deemed to show a transmission result of an E-mail, Applicants submit that such a transmission result (OK or NG) would merely be equivalent to the result between the network facsimile apparatus and the server 3. Accordingly, Applicants submit that Ohta does not have any constitution corresponding to the updating unit of Claim 27.

Nothing in Ohta would teach or suggest an updating unit is adapted to, when a delivery status notification for a sent E-mail from an E-mail server is received by an E-mail unit, update contents of communication management information of the E-mail which received the delivery status notification in accordance with the received delivery status notification, as recited in Claim 27.

Accordingly, Claim 27 is believed to be patentable over Ohta.

Independent Claims 38 and 40 each recite features which are sufficiently similar to those discussed above with respect to Claim 27 that the reasons discussed above with regard to the latter claim, apply with equal force to Claims 38 and 40.

Claim 32 is directed to an image communicating apparatus for sending and receiving image information through a communication network. The apparatus includes an E-mail unit, an analyzing unit, and an error notification information output unit. The E-mail unit is adapted to send and receive E-mail via an E-mail server connected to the communication network. The analyzing unit is adapted to, when a delivery status notification returned from the E-mail server in response to the E-mail transmitted by the

E-mail unit is received, analyze contents of the received delivery status notification. The error notification information output unit is adapted to, when it is detected by the analysis of the analyzing unit that the received delivery status notification is a transmission error notification of the sent E-mail, output error notification information indicative of a transmission error of the sent E-mail.

Claim 32 is directed to the case in which E-mail from an image communicating apparatus is transmitted to the destination through an E-mail server. By virtue of the features of Claim 28, a DSN transmitted from the E-mail server is analyzed, and then, if an error is detected, the information indicating the transmission error of the E-mail is output.

As explained above in connection with Claim 27, Applicants submit that Ohta does not disclose that the server 3 returns a DSN with respect to a transmitted E-mail to the network facsimile apparatus. Accordingly, nothing in Ohta would teach or suggest (1) an analyzing unit adapted to analyze a DSN, and (2) an error notification information output unit adapted to output error notification information indicative of a transmission error of a sent E-mail, when it is detected by the analysis of the analyzing unit that the received DSN is a transmission error notification of the sent E-mail, as recited in Claim 32.

Accordingly, Claim 32 is believed to be patentable over Ohta.

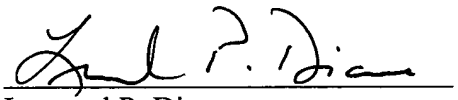
A review of the other art of record has failed to reveal anything which, in Applicants' opinion, would remedy the deficiencies of the art discussed above, as references against the independent claims herein. Those claims are therefore believed patentable over the art of record.

The other claims in this application are each dependent from one or another of the independent claims discussed above and are therefore believed patentable for the same reasons. Since each dependent claim is also deemed to define an additional aspect of the invention, however, the individual reconsideration of the patentability of each on its own merits is respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully request favorable reconsideration and early passage to issue of the present application.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our New York office by telephone at (212) 218-2100. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below listed address.

Respectfully submitted,



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